

We invite teachers to show these 'sparklers' before, during, or after their own fifth graders write to the same practice prompt.

A Fifth Grade Nevada "Sparkler"

A *sparkler* is not a perfect piece of writing, but it "shines" in small ways that all students can both identify and discuss. When students analyze *sparkling* techniques used by other student writers, they are more likely to try these techniques in their own drafts.

Amber, a Nevada fifth grader, prepared for her state writing examination by composing and revising the following piece of narrative writing two months before taking her test. This was the second of three practice prompts Amber's teacher assigned her.

Read the prompt carefully. Then read Amber's response. Be prepared to talk about where her writing techniques *sparkle* as well as where Amber might make the writing even better if she wrote just one more draft.



Amber's Practice Prompt: *It's always a pleasure to give and receive gifts. Sometimes the gift is a present. Sometimes the gift is something someone does for you or someone else. What is the best gift you have ever given or received? Tell about a time you gave or received a gift and why that gift was important to you.*

Amber's writing: "You'll See!"

"Huuuuuuuu" says six year old Amber, as she watches the T.V. "I'm bored," she says.

"Uh, huh, Yep, Okay, Yes, We're going right now Okay, bye," says Amber's mom, as she hangs up the phone. "Where are we going?" says Amber. "You'll see," says Amber's Mom.

"Why are we going to Pets-Mart?" says Amber. "We're meeting someone" says Amber's Mom. "Who" says Amber. "You'll see!" says Amber's Mom.

Amber and her mom start walking towards a caramel colored truck. "Isn't that Kim's truck?" says Amber. "You'll see" says Amber's Mom. "Why are we meeting Kim?" says Amber. "I said, You'll see!" says Amber's Mom. "Why do I haveta see? Why can't you tell?" yells Amber.

A short, blond lady comes out of the truck, holding a dog carrying case. "Hi" says the lady with a soothing voice. "Hi, Kim" says Amber and her mom. "Why are you carrying one of your dogs?" says Amber. "I'm not... I'm carrying yours!" says Kim.

"Now you won't be bored," says Amber's Mom. "Thank you! I love him!" says Amber. "You're Welcome," says Kim. "I'll call him Oreo." says Amber.

An interactive task for other fifth graders: Amber demonstrated strong **voice** and **organization** skills while taking a few risks with this writing. Adding dialogue is a smart **voice** strategy, but it can be risky; if you don't punctuate it well, you can hurt your conventions score. Amber's repeated use of the line "You'll see" adds a nice structure to her story that should earn her higher than a three in **organization**. Look closely at Amber's dialogue and highlight several places where you believe she showed her best knowledge of punctuation rules.

Challenge: Study your rough draft to find some tired or unnatural sounding words to change for your revised draft.

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Arjun, a Nevada fifth grader, prepared for his state writing examination by composing and revising the following piece of narrative writing two months before taking his actual test. This was the second of three practice prompts Arjun's teacher assigned him.

Read the prompt carefully. Then read Arjun's response. Be prepared to talk about where his writing techniques *sparkle* as well as where Arjun might make the writing even better if he wrote just one more draft.



Arjun's Practice Prompt: *It's always a pleasure to give and receive gifts. Sometimes the gift is a present. Sometimes the gift is something someone does for you or someone else. What is the best gift you have ever given or received? Tell about a time you gave or received a gift and why that gift was important to you.*

Arjun's writing: "Family & Friends"

My family and friends are the best gift I have ever received. Without them, I wouldn't be the kid I am today. My friends and family have helped me with many things. Now I am a happy ten year old boy, but without my friends and family, I would be a hollow shell of the kid I am today.

Without my friends, I wouldn't be so "jolly" in school. My friends have encouraged me to take on new things. We all help each other in pain. My friends have believed in me just as I have believed in them. My two best friends make me the kid I am in school.

Well, I have known my family years longer than my friends. My family has always said someday I will reach the top stair in my studies, and also gave me much encouragement and love. Besides, without my family, I wouldn't be named Arjun, or I wouldn't even have been Asian! Wow! Family makes a difference!

See, without my friends and family, I wouldn't be the kid I am today. A happy ten year old boy. I respect my family and friends, as they respect me. We always get along! You see, my family and friends are my best gift I have ever, ever received!

An interactive task for other fifth graders: Arjun worked hard to make sure both his introduction and his conclusion referred back to the prompt in an interesting way, which was a great way to improve both his **organization** and his **idea development** scores. Notice how naturally Arjun does this; he doesn't begin with *I'm going to tell you about...* and conclude with *So now you know about...*, which rarely sounds natural. Highlight words and phrases in Arjun's introduction and conclusion that shows he consciously did this.

Challenge: Study your brainstorm or rough draft and find a way to *naturally* refer to the prompt as you begin and end your writing.